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## Introduction

At the turn of the twenty-first century research indicated the limited effectiveness of traditional external training courses in raising teacher performance and effecting sustainable change in classrooms (Rhodes and Houghton-Hill, 2000; Swafford, 1998). Alternative forms of continuing professional development (CPD) were therefore sought for staff.

Literature and initiatives such as The National Strategy (DfES, 2003) and National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching (CUREE, 2005) emerged which promoted coaching as effective CPD for staff and demonstrated how coaching could be used imaginatively in schools (e.g. Tolhurst, 2006). However, it was also noted at the time that there was “virtually no research in this country [the UK] to provide [evidence of] what effect coaching was having” (Lofthouse *et al*, 2010, p.7). The need for research into the effectiveness of coaching is widely recognised in the emerging field of coaching psychology (Linley, 2006; Short *et al*, 2010) and within the field of coaching in education there is an even greater paucity of literature (Allan, 2007).

### The benefits of coaching in education

An exploration of the literature relevant to this study indicated that much of the purported claims for the impact of coaching in education are based on conjecture. For example, that because coaching meets the criteria of effective adult learning it will *by default* be effective CPD (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). Furthermore, because coaching “enhances happiness, wellbeing and engagement [then the coachee] is *more likely* to achieve peak performance” (author’s emphasis) (Crabb, 2011, p.27). Within UK education there is research indicating these emotional benefits result from coaching. For example, coaching is evaluated positively by teachers and they value the opportunity to think deeply about teaching (Cordingly *et al*, 2005; Leat & Lofthouse, 2006; Roberts & Henderson, 2005). This evidence base indicates there is a positive emotional outcome from coaching, however, more than this is needed to counter scepticism about the impact of coaching in schools.

A further personal benefit indicated in the literature for teachers is how coaching enhances their learning. For example, it is proposed that coaching helps the teacher analyse their practice critically and prompts reflection (Lofthouse *et al*, 2010). Harris and Muiys (2005) point out that the type of learning generally engaged in when one reflects alone is single-loop learning in which the person is constrained by their usual frameworks and thinking patterns. They note that when others are involved double-loop learning can take place which “encourages a move from routine [and] encourages risk taking” (p.60). Evidence that coaching helps teachers develop these skills is seen in many case studies noted by Burley and Pomphrey (2011). They describe how coaching can be used as a dynamic collaborative process for effective professional development utilising double-loop learning.

The benefits for teachers related to emotional wellbeing and increased reflection are clearly positive but what is needed, for the claims regarding the impact of coaching to move beyond a hypothetical status, is evidence of change in teacher’s actual behaviour in the classroom and the organization. Two UK studies provide some evidence of such changes. Zwart *et al* (2007), found peer coaching in a secondary school resulted in increased professional experimentation in teachers’ daily classes. Similarly, Allan (2007) in a small study of the benefits of coaching for three secondary school teachers found changes in teachers’ professional daily practice. Coaching was also found to have an impact at the whole-school level by Zwart *et al* (2007/9) in that it impacted on support and conversations with colleagues. Lofthouse *et al* (2010) also found evidence of this level of change from their research (into co-coaching in the UK). They found that there were “signs [that coaching] spills over into teachers talking to colleagues more about teaching” (p.8).

As can be seen above the literature review indicated a range of possible levels at which benefits from coaching might be seen. Three levels were adopted for this research to enable an exploration into specific changes that school leaders might see from coaching. This would then enable the evidence base for coaching in educational settings to move beyond the hypothetical link regarding wellbeing. The three levels were: (1) the individual personal/ emotional level, to encompass the ‘feel-good factor’ and increased wellbeing noted by many authors; (2) the coachees’ daily practice level, such as changes to their teaching in the classroom or their

leadership skills; and (3) the organisational level within the school through, for example, increased acceptance of change and more professional discussions with colleagues.

#### *Research Question this study sought to answer*

For schools where the use of coaching is reported what are the continuing professional development (CPD) co-ordinators', and coachees' perceptions of the benefits of coaching, at the three levels of: individual personal/ emotional, individuals' daily practice, school-wide?

#### *Definition of coaching used in this study*

There are many differences in how the term coaching is used. The definition adopted for this study was drawn from the literature on non-directive coaching (Downey, 2003). Therefore coaching activities in this current study are defined as those that:

- Involve a series of structured conversations.
- Are learner-led regarding the questions addressed and answers found.

#### *Types of coaching activities*

In education, writers have used specific terminology to denote the different types of coaching activities that exist. The most extensive and current list of coaching activities found during the literature review was the NCSL publication by Creasy & Patterson (2005). In their paper seven types of coaching activities are defined, of which four were focused on in this study (see Table 1 below).

## **Method**

### Participants

25 CPD co-ordinators within local, urban, mainstream secondary schools were sent postal questionnaires. These schools were selected as they were urban, mainstream, had been maintained by their Local Authority for some time and the researcher could travel to each easily. This was therefore a convenience sample. 10 of 25 questionnaires were returned and in all of these the respondents noted at least

one coaching activity was taking place in the school. It is possible that where no coaching was taking place the questionnaire was not returned resulting in a volunteer bias (Heiman, 2002) whereby only those interested in coaching replied. Seven CPD co-ordinators who indicated they would take part in a semi-structured interview were contacted and six responded. To recruit coachees the interviewed CPD co-ordinators were asked to recommend two coachees from the school. Seven coachees were recruited and interviewed.

### Data collection

Phase I of the research design was a postal questionnaire, designed by the researcher, sent to the CPD co-ordinators. A questionnaire was used as it could gather a small amount of quantitative and qualitative data in a standardised form which could be compared across the schools (Robson, 2011). Quantitative data on the coaching activities that had taken place in the school in the previous academic year was gathered, and qualitative data regarding the CPD co-ordinators' perceived benefits of each coaching activity, was collected. The chart to gather this data was based on Creasy & Paterson's (2005) list of coaching activities which the CPD co-ordinators were sent. The CPD co-ordinator was asked to state up to two benefits for each coaching activity they noted. These two questions can be seen in Table 2. A reliability co-efficient is not available as it was not a published questionnaire.

In-depth qualitative data about the benefits of coaching was gathered from those occupying two different roles within the school: CPD co-ordinators and coachees. Their views were collected through a semi-structured interview designed by the researcher. Literature on social research (Robson, 2011) indicated that an interview was an appropriate data collection instrument because the data required was the CPD co-ordinators' perceptions of processes within their social unit (i.e. their school) and their understanding of particular phenomena (i.e. the coaching activities that had taken place). In the interview the CPD co-ordinator was asked to expand on the impact of each coaching activity they had noted in the questionnaire through describing the changes they perceived in the coachee or school. The coachees were asked to describe the coaching and how it had impacted upon them.

The interviews were conducted in the participant's school by the author. The participant's permission to tape the interview was sought. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents each school was allocated a sample number. Once all the interviews had been transcribed each participant who had requested one was sent a copy to check that it reflected an accurate representation of their views.

### Data analysis

Quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire was analysed to explore the range of coaching activities which had taken place in the schools in the previous academic year and the number of activities in each category (see Figure 'a' below). As Figure 'b' shows, the most frequently occurring activities across the sample were specialist coaching, 20 of the 32 coaching activities (62.5%) in the schools were specialist coaching, and co-coaching, 8 of the activities (25%) were co-coaching. Team and expert coaching were being used a little by the schools in the sample. There were 2 examples of each (2 x 6%). These two types of coaching were therefore not considered further.

Further analysis was undertaken to explore which roles (i.e. different job holders) in the schools were being supported through the coaching activities (see Figure 'c' below).

Qualitative data from the questionnaire was coded to explore the reported benefits of coaching at three different levels, those being:

- individual personal/ emotional level - impact was for, or within, the coachee
- individual daily practice level - impact was on the coachee's daily actions
- schoolwide level - impact was across different people.

This data was used to check congruence with the richer data from the interviews.

The data from the semi-structured interviews was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) following the process described by Smith and Osborn (2008). To illustrate the different levels during the interview a prompt sheet was used: IP for the individual/ personal level; IDP for the level of individual daily practice; and SW for the schoolwide level. Comments from all the interviewees were collated under emerging themes and each cluster of comments given a relevant title.

The interviewee's comments relating to benefits were grouped to explore the theme, and level, of benefits the CPD co-ordinators and coachees perceived had resulted from the coaching activities.

## Results

The level and theme of impact that the CPD co-ordinators and coachees perceived coaching to have in the school is illustrated below through quotes. Where appropriate questions from the interviewer are shown in italics. Data from the questionnaires was found to be congruent with data from the interviews.

### 1) Perceived benefits at the individual personal / emotional level

#### CPD co-ordinators

Within the individual personal/ emotional level the main benefit theme all the CPD co-ordinators noted was emotional benefits. This included comments about increased job satisfaction, motivation, reassurance, confidence or feeling valued and supported.

Unpicking what you are doing in the classroom and either validating it or giving you some way of moving forward with something. A confidence... a kind of reassurance. (Co-ordinator B)

The impact on the daily practice allows it [coaching] to have an impact here [points to IP] as if you are feeling you are doing a better job you've got more satisfaction. (Co-ordinator E)

One CPD co-ordinator noted that she felt that the coachee having ownership over the process was a benefit.

That was me making a judgement that they 'owned' the process, I feel lots happens *to you* in induction, and this [coaching] is an opportunity where they can say "I need to talk about this". (Co-ordinator B)

#### Coachees

The main benefit that all coachees perceived coaching offered at the individual personal level was emotional support.

Oh that one! [points to IP] ... the coach helping me think how would I actually do it, so there was increased reflection, motivation, job satisfaction. (Coachee B)

A summary of these findings can be seen in Table 3.

## 2) Perceived benefits at the individual daily practice level

### CPD co-ordinators

At this level all of the CPD co-ordinators mentioned benefits in relation to teaching and learning. They stated benefits in terms of actual changes in teaching practices such as improved pace of lessons or better differentiated questioning. They also noted how it had improved teachers' practice (e.g. moving from 'good' to 'outstanding') and pupil attainment.

We were in a situation where we had to improve our teaching and learning dramatically and ... it worked! (Co-ordinator F)

Two CPD co-ordinators also talked of the impact of increased risk taking and of teachers trying new ideas which improved their teaching and learning in the classroom.

*The conversations you have heard have made you think they are trying new strategies?*

Yes, I have seen it in observations too, they have increased confidence in trying different approaches. I have seen them in meetings [talking about] what they have tried that has worked and how they have adapted it. (Co-ordinator C)

Four of the CPD co-ordinators specified benefits at this level related to increased sharing of practice between teachers.

Cross-pollination of ideas and strategies within the classroom.

*And you have known that is happening? seen it?*

Yes, through teachers talking to each other and saying "Oh I tried that thing you said"... in the staff room. (Co-ordinator E)

Another main benefit three CPD co-ordinators perceived at this level related to coaching for middle leaders, in that they were able to lead better since they had either more time to reflect on their leadership skills, or they felt empowered and more confident to lead and challenge.

You could argue that the coaching with the middle leader, empowering him to understand what it is to be a leader, that in itself has enabled him to create the climate in which his team do genuinely discuss now their practice (Co-ordinator D)

### Coachees

All the coachees made comments at this level related to teaching and learning. They described the benefits as aspects of the coaching conversation. For example, 'time



to break down a plan into small steps', 'looking at obstacles to making the changes they were considering' and 'being able to verbalise a plan'.

I was forced to verbalise and articulate my thinking and be explicit. At the end I was very clear in my own mind and what I was going to do next. That was good as if you externalise your thoughts you make it relevant to your pupils. (Coachee E)

Increased time for reflection was also a theme four coachees noted at this level.

The biggest benefit is the time to think about teaching, to take time out to think about it. (Coachee C)

All the coachees also noted benefits related to ownership. They mentioned specific benefits such as being able to focus on their *own* target, consider what was right *for them* and *their pupils*, and to come up with *their own ideas*.

All the time she [the coach] was very good at not saying "well, why don't you do this, or that", she was ... encouraging me to think and come up with my own answers... leaving the ball firmly in my court, it is up to me to find my solutions. (Coachee B)

One coachee, who had found the coaching difficult, noted that the "huge changes" in his daily practice had been possible because of the ownership he had been able to have in devising how to improve areas of weakness.

I now look back at it and see the benefits of it.... the involvement of me in that, in like "here is a problem that I spotted ... what do you think will be helpful in that?" so as well as the incremental approach ... it was that we were both thinking, rather than from upon high ... like "here is the one thing you can do", it was more..."here is an issue, what is your first thought about how you can do that?" (Coachee D)

One coachee noted how coaching skills had benefited their teaching as they had used the same skills with the pupils. For example, they noted that their questioning of pupils had improved and they saw the importance of thinking time for the pupils.

A summary of these findings can be seen in Table 4.

### **3) Perceived benefits at the schoolwide level**

#### CPD co-ordinators

A theme noted by four CPD co-ordinators was better communication between teachers, staff and leadership, and one described this as an increased "openness" in the culture.

I think improved communication is a great part of coaching.... not just in the classroom but the whole [school] structure.... Of senior management talking to the rest of the staff...different roles, teachers, faculties... communication with each other. (Co-ordinator E)

Another benefit theme at this level was better leadership skills which three co-ordinators felt impacted at the whole school level.

Yes, I know through conversations with her that [since the coaching] she ... is much more aware of what you need to be doing in leadership...so last year (it was) in IDP but [now] also school wide. (Co-ordinator B)

### Coachees

At the schoolwide level four coachees also mentioned that a benefit of coaching was more collaborative working across faculties and sharing of ideas.

One of the benefits for the whole school is that you do have more collaboration across faculties, you get to know your colleagues outside curriculum areas, which can be something we don't do..... so you work with others in collaboration, across faculties especially, not just the same people you work with all the time. (Coachee A)

Many of the coachees' comments related to benefits derived from learning the skills of coaching. One theme mentioned by four coachees was being able to better support colleagues and how to reflect on situations to help oneself at difficult times.

Well, I think we were already reflective but it provided us with the skills to sort of know what to do with that, and how to help others... Even now when I am talking to a colleague that is going through a situation, I have really learnt how to let them speak. (Coachee C)

I came out of it feeling much more of this was my thing, this does not feel beyond me to solve it on my own... you don't want people to regurgitate answers, you want people to be able to ask the same questions when they are doing it alone to find the answers. If I had been told the answers from on high then it would have been very easy to think then... well ... when something else happens I just need to get someone else in to tell me what ...[to do] (Coachee D)

A summary of these findings can be seen in Table 5.

### **Level at which each type of coaching was perceived to have most impact**

#### Specialist coaching

All of the comments on specialist coaching activities indicated that it impacted at the individual daily practice level due to the increased time to reflect. Coachees also perceived there to be great impact at the individual personal level through emotional support such as motivation, reinforcement and encouragement.

Further analysis of which role was being coached within each of the specialist coaching examples was conducted to explore the above difference. It was found that the role in school being coached influenced the perceived level of impact.

Where newly qualified teachers (NQTs) were coached the impact was at the individual personal and individual daily practice level. Where middle and pastoral leaders were coached the impact was at the individual daily practice and schoolwide levels.

*For the [specialist coaching] with the NQTs, where was the main benefit?*

Initially personal [points to IP] but then it comes into their daily practice [points to IDP]. (Co-ordinator A)

*So with the [specialist] coaching for middle leaders, where would you say that benefited?*

I would say for some of them in their practice and because of the roles some of them were holding there were school wide benefits, like when they were chairing meetings and how they approached things because they were experienced and leading things in school. (Co-ordinator C)

Specialist coaching was also considered to impact at a different level when more experienced, under-performing teachers were being coached. The two CPD co-ordinators who spoke about this perceived that these teachers benefited at the individual personal/ emotional level as it helped them reflect on their continuing involvement with the teaching profession.

We had 8 people on it [specialist coaching programme] and 6 have left the school. That could be interpreted as success. The vast majority have chosen to...leave the profession, so maybe they did not engage in it very much, as we wanted, as it was sort of the straw that broke the camel's back, but they thought about it and said "I have made my decision"... they left, that could be described as a good outcome for the school. (Co-ordinator F)

A summary of these findings can be seen in Table 6.

### Co-coaching

All four CPD co-ordinators who discussed co-coaching noted benefits at the individual daily practice level.

We set up coaching trios [co-coaching] ... there was a particular focus, each person had to work on something to do with teaching and learning...we were in a situation where we had to improve our teaching and learning dramatically [to avoid the Ofsted category of special measures] and it worked! (Co-ordinator F)

Three specifically noted that the benefits of co-coaching moved from individual daily practice to the schoolwide level.

It was between IDP and SW, as there was more support between colleagues... and better questioning of pupils, definitely much improved, and [they were] more open to change ... so in fact probably more school wide than individual. (Co-ordinator F)

Comments from the three coachees who experienced co-coaching indicated that they also perceived the impact to be mostly at the individual daily practice level. This was due to the following aspects of coaching: that they had ownership over the process (e.g. to focus on their own target and plans); the skills they learnt from the coaching sessions (e.g. the type of questions to ask); and the pressure to do something, and share ideas, as they were working with a peer.

Accountability to colleagues made a difference – there was an integrity to do something yourself and also to share ideas to help others. (Coachee E)

The impact of co-coaching was therefore perceived by both roles to be at the personal /emotional level but mostly at the individual daily practice level. CPD co-ordinators additionally perceived that this impact led to benefits at the schoolwide level.

A summary of these findings can be seen in Table 7.

## Discussion

This research sought to contribute new data to the evidence base on the benefits of coaching within schools and to illustrate the possible wider impact of coaching in schools, such as change in teachers' skills in the classroom, beyond the wellbeing and emotional impact. The development of this evidence base will enable school leaders to consider whether coaching is “just [going to] make them [the teachers] feel good” or whether other benefits will be achieved alongside this.

Data gathered from two different roles involved in coaching (CPD co-ordinators and coachees) in a sample of secondary schools, illustrated that benefits from specialist coaching and co-coaching can be seen at a range of levels throughout the school.

Evidence of impact was found at the individual, personal level in the form of emotional benefits for teachers such as increased job satisfaction, motivation and

feeling valued as other research in coaching has also shown (Cordingly, 2005; Leat & Lofthouse, 2006).

This research has also found evidence of perceived benefits in relation to teachers' actual daily practice, both within the classroom and the wider school. The CPD co-ordinators noted changes in pace of lessons, better differentiated questions, staff moving from 'good' to 'outstanding' in observations, increased risk-taking in classrooms and staff trying new strategies. These findings build on earlier studies providing evidence for actual changes in teachers' practice after coaching. For example, supporting Zwart *et al's* (2007) and Allan's (2007) claims that coaching can result in changes in teachers' professional practice such as increasing their experimentation in classes.

Comments from the coachees indicated that the increased time to reflect and other specific aspects of the coaching conversation supported them to make these changes in their practice because it prompted changes in their reflection and learning pattern. The aspects from the coaching conversation they referred to were factors such as considering obstacles, isolating one 'next step' and being asked to verbalise a plan. This indicates that coachees were engaging in double-loop, rather than single-loop learning (Harris and Muiys, 2005) which resulted in a move away from routine problem-solving and encouraged them to think of more innovative strategies they could try. These changes were seen by the CPD co-ordinators and noted as increased risk-taking in the classroom and in teachers trying new strategies.

Both the CPD co-ordinators and coachees also perceived benefits from the coaching that were schoolwide. They noted more communication, collaboration and openness within the school as staff talked more to each other about teaching and shared strategies. This provides evidence for Tschannen-Moran's (2010) claim that coaching not only engages the teacher in development of their own practice but there is more collaborative working as teachers talk more about teaching to colleagues. Tolhurst (2010) has proposed that learning the process of coaching would help staff use time they have together more productively. Findings from the coachees and CPD co-ordinators supports this. The coachees noted that after

learning the skills of coaching they felt more able to help colleagues reflect because they knew, for example, what helpful questions to ask. The CPD co-ordinators also perceived that coaching contributed to better communication between all staff in the school, including between teachers and the leadership team. These findings support writers such as Allen (2008), Johnson (1999), Tolhurst (2006, 2010) and Tschannen-Moran (2010) who have proposed that coaching can contribute to culture change as it will impact on the way staff communicate and reflect in the organisation.

### **Benefits of specialist coaching**

The findings from the current study indicate that specialist coaching has a slightly different impact depending on the role the coachee holds within the school.

#### *Middle leaders*

The benefits for middle leaders were seen in their individual daily practice and, as a consequence of this, at the schoolwide level. There was a theme from the findings that specialist coaching helped middle leaders define their values and consider their leadership style, and this enabled them to lead colleagues more effectively.

The benefits with middle leaders were found to impact at the schoolwide level as coaching improved the leader's capacity and skills. This supports Tolhurst's (2010) assertion that coaching for middle leaders helps them encourage reflective practice of staff, challenge them more if required and to develop effective distributed leadership across the school.

#### *Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and experienced, under-performing teachers*

This study suggests that when used with newly qualified (NQTs) and experienced, under-performing teachers, specialist coaching has impact at the individual personal/emotional level. The findings here indicate that for NQTs their daily practice is also enhanced. With under-performing, experienced teachers the findings of the current study indicate that the chance to reflect deeply at a personal level brings slightly different benefits. It appears that it enables them to explore their commitment to any changes that the school may be undergoing (e.g. pressure from being graded

inadequate by Ofsted). This may result in changes in daily practice, if they commit to the changes, or them making the choice to leave the school/ profession.

### **Benefits of co-coaching**

Benefits from co-coaching were perceived by coachees and CPD co-ordinators to be at the individual daily practice level as aspects of the coaching conversation and increased reflection time enabled them to develop their teaching skills in the classroom. The coachees noted that the ownership they had over the process supported them to make these changes as they were able to focus on their own goals, their own next step and consider what was appropriate for them and their class specifically.

Both roles noted that these benefits also impacted at the schoolwide level as staff reflected on their teaching more, even outside the coaching conversations, and supported each other to problem-solve issues. Coachees noted that after learning coaching skills they were better able to support colleagues as they knew what questions to ask to help someone reflect.

### **Limitations of the study**

A convenience sample (of local schools) followed by a purposive sample (to seek out CPD co-ordinators and coachees) was used in the study. As a consequence the sample may have a volunteer bias (Heiman, 2002) as participants all wanted to talk about, and possibly all felt positive, about coaching. Due to the low return rate the sample size is small. When using IPA however, a small, homogeneous sample is appropriate since IPA does not seek to “make... general claims” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p.55) but to explore how participants are making sense of their world by encouraging them to talk in depth about their experiences .

Due to lack of time and research colleagues the qualitative data was analysed by the researcher only. Two checks were used to increase the validity of the analysis. First, during the interviews respondents were asked to code the type of coaching activity they mentioned. This ensured that coding by the researcher and school professional

was similar. Second, the questionnaire data and interview data regarding the levels at which respondents placed the benefits were compared to check congruence.

It is important to note, as three CPD co-ordinators and one coachee did, that it is difficult to conclude whether the benefits discussed come exclusively from coaching. This is because other CPD activities were often engaged in simultaneously. For example, peer observations, that took place alongside co-coaching and were arranged across different faculties, also contributed to the increased communication within the school.

Future research on the benefits of coaching could usefully focus on gathering views from different roles in a school, not just the coachees. For example, views of the CPD co-ordinator, as in the current study, or the coachees' line manager or pupils.

### **Implications of the findings**

This research has provided evidence, from two different sources in a sample of secondary schools that: (1) the perceived benefits of coaching can be seen at three different levels within the school and; (2) to a limited degree, different types of coaching benefit a school in different ways.

The current study has contributed to the body of knowledge showing that coaching is perceived to have an impact on a teachers' daily practice as well as support them emotionally. It has illustrated that benefits at the emotional/ personal level, positive changes in the coachees behaviours within the classroom and schoolwide are all possible outcomes from coaching.

Co-coaching was found to impact strongly on teachers' daily practice and help develop teachers' meta-cognition regarding their teaching practice. This form of coaching also appears to impact strongly on the schoolwide culture by developing relationships and encouraging more talk in school about teaching and learning. Combining co-coaching with observations and ensuring coachee pairs are from across different faculties was found to be particularly helpful in achieving this. Co-coaching would therefore be a useful type of coaching for schools wanting to develop reflection on daily practice and communication across the school. As



schools become more autonomous the DfE (2010) is encouraging schools to develop “in-school systems” (p.73) to share effective practice. This study indicates that co-coaching within schools could help to achieve this. The development of a reflective culture within a school, where there is a focus on moving forward and where staff have the skills to cascade new knowledge across the organisation, could be paramount to school success in the future.

This research also sought to explore in more detail when, and how, different types of coaching would be useful in a schools’ journey of improvement. This would enable school leaders and staff supporting schools to make a more evidence informed choice of when to use a particular type of coaching.

Where enhancing middle leaders’ confidence and willingness to challenge staff is required specialist coaching can support a school to improve capacity in its leadership and develop effective distributed leadership. Tolhurst (2010) notes that “schools often invest time and resources in training teachers ... [but] very little time is spent on preparation for leadership” (p.140).

NQTs receiving specialist coaching experience the benefits emotionally and it impacts on their daily practice. During a period of change, such as when a school has been rated inadequate, staff feeling resistant to the changes may benefit from specialist coaching to support them to reflect on their commitment to the change process. This can help the reculturing of a school as resistance is discussed and explored so enabling staff to move through the cycle of denial, resistance and exploration to commitment (Scott & Jaffe, 1989) and consider whether or not they wish to leave the school.

In schools where teachers need support to reflect on, develop, and improve their teaching the findings indicate that co-coaching achieves this through teaching them a structure they can use with colleagues to reflect on their unique situations and focus on a plan to move forward which is right for them. Communication and openness between staff in the school was also seen as a benefit from this type of coaching.

## Conclusion

This study has therefore found that alongside the emotional, personal benefits from coaching, which support staff to 'feel good', there are also a range of further benefits. These include changes in staff practices in the classroom and in their interactions across the school. Evidence of these outcomes will enable school leaders to be less sceptical about the 'feel good' factor. They can celebrate this in the knowledge that there is likely to be other changes, and benefits, from coaching in an educational setting to the individual, their colleagues, pupils and the organisation as a whole.

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